

# Fact Sheet: Sen. Cornyn's Work On The Valley Levees

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- On July 11, 2007, Sen. Cornyn organized and hosted a meeting with Hidalgo and Cameron County officials, FEMA, the IBWC, and the Corps of Engineers to discuss FEMA's review of the IBWC levees. This meeting resulted in FEMA delaying the release of their preliminary flood maps giving Hidalgo County time to make repairs to their section of levees.
- On July 13, 2007, Sen. Cornyn called on FEMA to work with Valley leaders to ensure their concerns on the levee project are addressed.
- In Sept. 2007, Sen. Cornyn included an amendment to the State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill that required IBWC and DHS to study CBP's use of the flood control levees and any resulting damage. (Note: The amendment was stripped from the final bill.)
- On Sept. 27, 2007, Sen. Cornyn sent a letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee requesting the IBWC levees receive the maximum amount of appropriations in the final bill. \$10 million for the levees was included in the FY08 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, which passed the Senate last December.
- On Oct. 10, 2007, Sen. Cornyn toured the levees and hosted a roundtable discussion in Pharr, Texas. At this meeting, IBWC Commissioner Carlos Marin laid out an alternative concept of incorporating the border fence into the levee system.
- On Nov. 8, 2007, as a result of the Pharr meeting, Sen. Cornyn sent a letter to Secretary Chertoff in support of the Valley levee proposal.
- On Nov. 16, 2007, Sen. Cornyn hosted a follow-up meeting to the roundtable in Pharr to discuss the need to push for consideration of the Valley levee proposal.
- On Dec. 5, Sen. Cornyn met with Secretary Chertoff to renew his push for the Valley levee proposal.
- On Dec. 18, with Sen. Cornyn's support, the Senate passed the FY08 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, which included \$10 million for repair of the levees.

## TIMELINE OF SEN. CORNYN'S EFFORTS ON THE VALLEY LEVEE PROPOSAL

July 11, 2007: Sen. Cornyn Met With Hidalgo And Cameron County Officials, FEMA, IBWC, And The Corps Of Engineers To Discuss The Challenges Facing the IBWC Levees:

"Sen. Cornyn Hosted A Meeting In His Washington Office With Cameron County Judge Carlos Cascos, Hidalgo County Judge J.D. Salinas, Brownsville Mayor Pat Ahumada And

**Other Local Officials To Discuss The Levee Project."** (Sen. John Cornyn, "Cornyn: FEMA Must Work With Valley Officials On Levee Project," Press Release, 7/13/07)

**\*\*This Meeting Resulted In FEMA Delaying The Release Of Their Preliminary Flood Maps Giving Hidalgo County Time To Make Repairs To Their Section Of Levees.\*\***

**July 13, 2007: Sen. Cornyn Called On FEMA To Work With Valley Leaders To Ensure Their Concerns On The Levee Project Are Addressed:**

**"Sen. John Cornyn Called On FEMA To Work With Valley Leaders To Ensure Their Concerns On The Levee Project Are Addressed. He Also Committed To Continue Fighting In Congress For Adequate Funding For Levee Repairs And Upgrades."** (Sen. John Cornyn, "Cornyn: FEMA Must Work With Valley Officials On Levee Project," Press Release, 7/13/07)

- **Sen. Cornyn:** "The levee project is important to prevent flooding and protect lives, homes and property in the Rio Grande Valley. ... I am working with other members of the Texas Congressional delegation to fight for adequate funding for levee repairs and upgrades." (Sen. John Cornyn, "Cornyn: FEMA Must Work With Valley Officials On Levee Project," Press Release, 7/13/07)

**Sept. 2007: Sen. Cornyn Amended The State And Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill To Require IBWC And DHS To Study CBP's Use Of The Flood Control Levees And Any Resulting Degradations:**

**"Sen. Cornyn Added An Amendment To The Department Of State And Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill That Required The IBWC, In Coordination With Homeland Security And The Corps Of Engineers, To Report To Congress On The Importance Of The Levees To U.S. Border Patrol, So Congress Is Aware Of The Multiple Purposes The Levees Serve."** (Sen. John Cornyn, "Cornyn Asks Homeland Security Chief to Consider Proposed Valley Levee Plans," Press Release, 11/8/07)

**Sept. 27, 2007: Sen. Cornyn Sent A Letter To The Senate Appropriations Committee Requesting Maximum Funding For The Levees:**

**"Sen. Cornyn Also Sent A Letter To The Senate Appropriations Committee Requesting The IBWC Levees Receive The Maximum Amount Of Appropriations In The Final Bill."** (Sen. John Cornyn, "Cornyn Asks Homeland Security Chief to Consider Proposed Valley Levee Plans," Press Release, 11/8/07)

- **\$10 Million For The Levees Was Included In The FY08 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, Which Passed The Senate Last December.**

**Oct. 10, 2007: Sen. Cornyn Toured The Levees And Hosted A Roundtable Discussion In Pharr:**

**"U.S. Sen. John Cornyn ... Toured The Levees Of The International Boundary And Water Commission (IBWC) Flood Control System In The Rio Grande Valley. ... Sen. Cornyn Hosted A Roundtable Discussion On The Certification Process With Local Mayors, County Officials, Border Patrol Agents, And Representatives From FEMA, The IBWC, The Department Of Homeland Security, And The U.S. Army Corps Of Engineers."** (Sen. John Cornyn, "Cornyn Hosts Roundtable On Valley Levees," Press Release, 10/10/07)

- **Sen. Cornyn:** "Not only are the levees a critical safety measure against flooding, they also serve the U.S. Border Patrol as they seek to monitor and secure the border." (Sen. John Cornyn, "Cornyn Hosts Roundtable On Valley Levees," Press Release, 10/10/07)

**\*\*It Was At This Meeting That IBWC Commissioner Carlos Marin Laid Out An Alternative Concept Of Incorporating The Border Fence Into The Levee System.\*\***

**Nov. 8, 2007: Sen. Cornyn Sent A Letter To Secretary Chertoff In Support Of The Valley Levee Proposal:**

"U.S. Sen. John Cornyn ... Sent A Letter To U.S. Department Of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Michael Chertoff, Requesting That He Give Due Consideration To A Proposal To Incorporate The Levees Of The International Boundary And Water Commission (IBWC) As DHS Moves Forward With Border Fencing Plans Under The Secure Fence Act." (Sen. John Cornyn, "Cornyn Asks Homeland Security Chief to Consider Proposed Valley Levee Plans," Press Release, 11/8/07)

**Nov. 16, 2007: Sen. Cornyn Met With Valley Officials To Get An Update On The Progress Of The Valley Levee Proposal:**

"U.S. Sen. John Cornyn ... Hosted A Meeting In The U.S. Capitol With Cameron And Hidalgo County Judges To Discuss The Need To Push For Consideration Of The Levee Proposal. The Meeting Comes As A Follow-Up To A Roundtable Discussion He Held In Pharr Last Month." (Sen. John Cornyn, "Cornyn Meets With Valley Officials To Discuss Levee, Fence," Press Release, 11/16/07)

**Dec. 5, 2007: Sen. Cornyn Met With Secretary Chertoff, Where He Renewed His Push For The Valley Levee Proposal:**

"U.S. Sen. John Cornyn ... Met With U.S. Department Of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Michael Chertoff In A Renewed Effort To Urge The Secretary To Consider A Valley Levee Proposal Sen. Cornyn Had Brought To His Attention Earlier This Year." (Sen. John Cornyn, "Cornyn Meets With Homeland Security Chief, Makes Renewed Push For Valley Levee Proposal & Consultation On Fence," Press Release, 12/5/07)

**Dec. 18, 2007: Sen. Cornyn Voted For The FY08 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, Which Included \$10 Million For Repair Of The Levees:**

**On Dec. 18, With Sen. Cornyn's Support, The Senate Passed The FY08 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, Which Included \$10 Million For Repair Of The Levees.** (H.R. 2764, CQ Vote #441: Motion Agreed To 76-17; R 33-14; D 41-3; I 2-0, 12/18/07, Cornyn Voted Yea)